

5th June, 1959

COCOM Document No. 3555 B

COORDINATING COMMITTEERECORD OF DISCUSSIONONPROPOSED FRENCH SALE OF NATURAL URANIUM AND NUCLEAR GRAPHITE TO POLAND1st June, 1959

Present: Belgium (Luxembourg), Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States.

References: COCOM Documents Nos. 3395, 3447 and 3488.

1. The FRENCH Delegate recalled that on the 12th February, 1959 (COCOM Doc. 3395) the French Delegation had asked the Committee to give their views regarding a possible export to Poland of 3 tons of natural metallic uranium sheathed in aluminium and 50 tons of nuclear graphite. As a result of the discussions on this matter, the Committee had on the 16th April 1959, as set out in COCOM Doc. 3488, given their agreement to the pursuit of the negotiations between the French Government and Poland regarding this plan. The French Delegate stated that he had received instructions to inform the Committee that the negotiations had produced a negative result, the Polish Government having informed the French representative that they had been able to obtain these products "elsewhere". As regards the graphite, the French representative had been informed that the question had already been "out-distanced", and as regards the uranium, that the question was no longer "of present interest". The French Government had nevertheless been able to obtain information as to the end-use in Poland of these nuclear materials. These were to serve for an exponential experiment of the most classic type. Polish authorities were said to have considered that the graphite offered by France was too dear and had informed the French Government that they had been able to obtain supplies from other sources. The competent French authorities nevertheless considered that this explanation was not wholly genuine, as the French exporting company sold graphite at the prices current on the world market. They were now wondering therefore, not without some concern, in what country the Poles had been able to obtain what they had originally intended to buy from France. The Delegate emphasised that the principal countries producing graphite, apart from the U.S.S.R., were Japan, Germany, France, the United States and the United Kingdom. According to trustworthy intelligence, however, there was every reason to believe that it was not at all in the interests of the U.S.S.R. to help in the creation of a Polish nuclear reactor, and the French Delegate considered that the Committee might be able to help the French Atomic Energy Commission to solve the problem with which they were now faced. The Delegate passed on this information exactly as it had been received and left it to be examined by the Committee. In conclusion, the Delegate stated that the length of time which had been necessary to the Coordinating Committee to study the French request and to give the French Government their agreement in principle to the pursuit of the negotiations had not helped the French position in this matter.

2. The GERMAN Delegate thanked the French Delegate for the statement he had just made. He stated that he had not understood from that statement whether the Poles had obtained natural uranium, and would be grateful if the French Delegate could reply on this point.

3. The FRENCH Delegate thanked his German colleague for the question. He said that if he had made little reference to the natural uranium, this was because the Poles themselves had been very brief on the subject. The Delegate stated that it was possible that the U.S.S.R. had sold Poland 3 tons of natural uranium, but that, compared to the 50 tons of nuclear graphite, this delivery was only of secondary importance.

4. The NETHERLANDS Delegate asked the French Delegate for explanations on two points: 1. Was it to be deduced from the comments made by the French Dele-

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te that the U.S.S.R. had been unable to deliver to Poland the 50 tons of nuclear graphite also?

2. Was it considered that the periods which had been necessary to the Committee for the study of this case had been too long? The Delegate thought he was right in believing that this had been a special case and that it had not been submitted to the Committee as an ordinary exception request.

5. Replying first to his Netherlands colleague's last remark, the FRENCH Delegate confirmed that his interpretation was correct, and added that it was the French Delegation themselves who, being aware of the extreme importance of this matter, had agreed to the exceptional periods asked for by the other Delegations, in order that Member Governments might be able to take their decisions in full knowledge of the circumstances. The French Delegate then answered the Netherlands Delegate's first remark. He stated that although, as was generally known, the U.S.S.R. was a very large producer of nuclear graphite, the question of exporting this graphite to Poland had a political aspect, and it did not seem likely, in the present state of Soviet-Polish relations, that the U.S.S.R. would be inclined to assist Polish progress in the atomic field, even though that country possessed remarkable scientists and research workers, in the Madame Curie tradition.

6. The UNITED STATES Delegate stated that it was extremely useful to the Committee to receive information such as that which the French Delegation had supplied. The Delegate had listened to his French colleague with great interest and wished to make certain comments. First of all, as regards the question of the study period, the United States Delegate had noted with satisfaction his French colleague's statement to the effect that this length of time had been necessary to enable an objective comparison of the positions of the various Delegations. The Delegate pointed out to the Committee that if this transaction had been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, it would have been carried out within the framework of the safeguards required by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and the time limits <sup>would</sup> certainly have been very long. The Delegate asked whether the French Government had had discussions with the Polish authorities regarding the guarantees asked for by the Vienna Agency. With regard to the French information on the end-use of these nuclear materials, it had been evident to the United States authorities, in view of the quality and quantity of the materials ordered, that an exponential experiment would be the obvious and normal use for the materials, and the United States authorities considered such an end-use to be of strategic importance.

7. The UNITED KINGDOM Delegate said he thought that either the Poles had bought the graphite from the U.S.S.R., or else they had not bought it at all.

8. Commenting on the statements made by his colleagues, the FRENCH Delegate noted that they had not raised specific questions, but had voiced general impressions. He pointed out that his Delegation did not attach ~~as much importance~~ to an exponential experiment <sup>itself</sup>, which only constituted the beginning of something, as to the fact of <sup>the</sup> delivery itself. On the other hand he regretted very much that the supply of this graphite by a nation other than France should have caused the loss of the possibility of putting into effect the Vienna Agency's controls in the case of Poland. This had been the principal reason why the French Delegation had been anxious to inform the Committee of the failure of the talks initiated by Poland with France in order to obtain these atomic materials.

9. After having heard his French colleague's comments, the GERMAN Delegate said the French statement showed that 3 hypotheses existed:

(1) The first and the most likely was that the graphite had been delivered by the Soviet Union. Two facts supported this hypothesis. On the one hand, the fact that the Poles had not revealed their source of supply. On the other hand, the fact that Polish experiments in the atomic field were only at a preliminary stage. In consequence, the delivery by the U.S.S.R. of the products concerned could not be regarded as a major contribution by the U.S.S.R. to the Polish effort in the atomic field.

(2) The second hypothesis was that of an illegal transaction, although this possibility seemed most unlikely in view of the extremely severe controls

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which were applied to everything concerning atomic energy.

(3) Finally, the third and last hypothesis was that graphite delivered to Poland might have been supplied by Western countries. He refused to take this possibility into consideration. No doubt must be allowed, however, to persist in the minds of Delegations. It would therefore be useful if each Delegation could state in due course that no nuclear graphite had been supplied to Poland from their country.

10. The UNITED STATES Delegate stated that his Delegation welcomed the French Delegate's remarks as to the importance of the international Agency in Vienna for the security of the Free World.

11. In conclusion, the CHAIRMAN recalled that the French Government had informed the Coordinating Committee before continuing the negotiations which had been started in view of the possible supply of these atomic materials. The Chairman stated that, although he could exclude the possibility that there had been any export of nuclear graphite or of natural uranium to Poland by a member country, it was possible that the Polish Government had got into touch with other countries regarding the same transaction, which would explain the information received by the French Delegation. In that event, the Chairman did not doubt that all Delegations, in accordance with the Committee's rules, would act in the same way as the French Delegation. The Chairman stated finally that, as the German Delegate had observed, it would be desirable that the Committee set a date on which Delegations could confirm that their Governments had not authorised any delivery to Poland of the products concerned.

12. After a brief discussion, the COMMITTEE agreed to hear Delegations on this matter during the meeting to be held on the 12th June.

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